

## D.C. Residents Give Police High Marks for Courtesy and Service

Residents of the District of Columbia give Metropolitan Police officers generally high marks for being courteous, helpful, fair and responsive to the community's concerns. And while some residents say police could do a better job of working with them to solve problems, few identified excessive force or corruption as a major problem in the police department. A sizeable percentage of residents reported improvements in police service over the past year, and a majority were optimistic that it will improve even more over the next year.

Those are some of the key findings of a recent survey commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Department that asked District residents about their perceptions of police service and their experiences with the MPDC. The random telephone survey was designed by the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University, whose interviewers contacted more than 2,200 adult residents during the summer of 1998.

The researchers said the survey "found substantial levels of support for police" in the District. Specifically, it revealed that:

- 87 percent of residents said the police in their neighborhood are "very responsive" or "somewhat responsive" to community concerns.

- 83 percent of residents said police are very or somewhat polite when dealing with people in their neighborhood, 87 percent said police are very or somewhat helpful, and 88 percent said officers are very or somewhat fair. Perceptions of police service remained positive even among those who were stopped by the police or had other contact with officers.

- Approximately two-thirds of residents said police are doing a good or very good job of dealing with neighborhood problems, working with residents to solve problems, and actually preventing crime. Six in 10 said the police are doing a good or very good job of assisting crime victims.

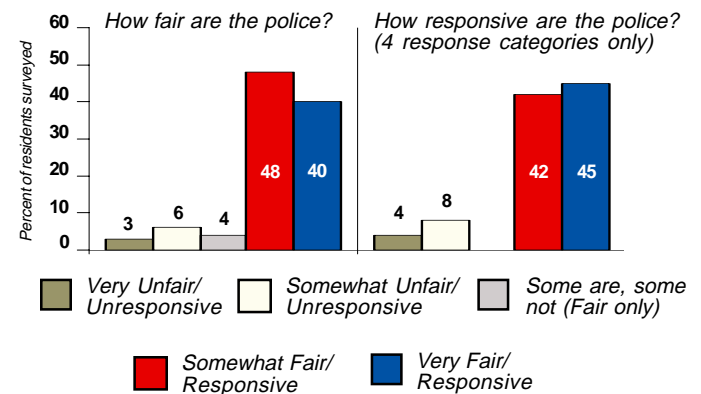
- Only 7 percent said excessive force by officers was a "big problem" in their neighborhood, and 80 percent said it was no problem at all (13 percent said "some problem"). Seventy-five percent said police corruption was "no problem"; 10 percent said it was a big problem, 15 percent some problem.

- 41 percent of residents said police service in their neighborhood had gotten better over the past year; just 4 percent said it had gotten worse (55 percent said it stayed the same). Looking ahead over the next year, 55 percent said they expected police service to get better, while just 4 percent expected it to get worse (42 percent expect service to stay the same).

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### CITYWIDE SURVEY

Most residents surveyed found MPDC officers to be fair and responsive.



## The Holocaust: A New Topic For Recruit Training

The MPDC is making the Holocaust and the role of police in a free, democratic society a subject of discussion for both new recruits and managers. The January com-

mand staff meeting included a tour and lecture at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and a day-long visit to the museum is

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Command members tour the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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# Chief Ramsey Asks Justice Department To Examine Use of Force Issue

After nine months as chief of the Metropolitan Police Department, Chief Charles H. Ramsey took the unusual measure of asking the U.S. Department of Justice to step in and examine the MPDC's policies and practices concerning the use of force. In a January 6, 1999, letter to Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, Chief Ramsey stated that he believed the MPDC's policies, practices, and procedures concerning the use of force and use of force investigations did not meet the high standards he expected and which the community demanded.

"I believe very strongly that this is a necessary step that will ultimately help restore the public's trust and confidence in the Metropolitan Police Department's ability to effectively manage the use of force issue," Chief Ramsey stated in testimony before the D.C. Council's Committee on the Judiciary. "I will not be asking the Justice Department to delve into the minute details of each and every officer-involved shooting. I want the Justice Department to look at our policies, our training, our record-keeping and monitoring procedures, and our investigatory practices and provide us with either a clean bill of health, or specific, concrete recommendations for improvement."

Following discussions with top MPDC officials, the Justice Department decided the inquiry will have two parts:

- The primary focus will be on the management practices and

procedures on the use of force. This will center on the quality of policies, training, and investigative procedures.

- The Justice Department will also examine individual use of force cases over the last three years, five at the most. The primary purpose is to see if proper and thorough investigatory procedures were followed and, if not, how those procedures could be improved for the future.

The review will be carried out over the next eight months by a team of law enforcement officials and experts from across the country. The team will be headed by Steven H. Rosenbaum, chief of the Justice Department's special litigation unit.

Chief Ramsey has worked to keep both the public and the Department informed about the investigation. He notified union officials before making his request

and arranged for them to meet with the Justice Department to discuss any concerns. He recorded two videotaped messages for sworn and civilian members, and held four walk-in meetings throughout the city, giving members a chance to discuss the inquiry directly with the Chief. He also conducted numerous media interviews on the subject.

Since November, the MPDC has initiated a range of reforms designed to improve the Department's use of force policies, training, and investigations:

- A new use of force policy was issued that establishes a continuum to guide officers' actions in those situations where force may be required. New OC spray canisters and retractable batons issued to sworn members in recent months, along with training in their use, also support the new policy.

- The amount of mandatory firearms training is being doubled to 16 hours a year. The training will go beyond the ability to shoot accurately at a target; it will also encompass additional situational judgment training. In addition, all sworn members at the rank of lieutenant and below will go through a three-day course on less-than-lethal force options.

- Responsibility for monitoring and investigating use of force incidents is being transferred to the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) from operational units. A Force Investigation Team, led by a captain within OPR, is being created to ensure the quality and thoroughness of all deadly force investigations.

Both Chief Ramsey and Justice Department officials have said they hope the MPDC investigation will result in a national model that other jurisdictions could use in managing the use of force issue. □

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*The Chief's letter to Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder and his testimony before the D.C. Council's Judiciary Committee can be found in the "Chief's Corner" of the MPDC Web site ([www.mpdc.org](http://www.mpdc.org)).*

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## High Marks, cont.

"This survey provides the Metropolitan Police Department with an important baseline measure of our effectiveness in the eyes of our customers," said Chief of Police Charles H. Ramsey. "I am certainly pleased with the level of support expressed by the community, but I am also determined to improve the quality of our services in those areas which the survey highlighted—namely, problem solving, crime

prevention, and victim assistance."

In addition to measuring perceptions of police demeanor and service, the survey asked residents to identify the priority problems in their community. Out of a list of 21 potential problems, the top five identified by residents as a "big problem" or "some problem" in their neighborhood were running stop signals, too few recreational

programs, loitering, vandalized cars, and public drinking. They were followed by four serious crime problems: stolen vehicles, street drug dealing, home break-ins and thefts, and attacks and robberies.

Chief Ramsey said this information, broken down by police district, will be helpful to district managers in developing strategies to fight crime and reduce fear. □

*Copies of the study are available through the Office of Organizational Development, 202-727-2900.*

# MPDC's Short Term Action Plan Targets Quality of Life Improvements

After taking office on January 2, 1999, Mayor Anthony A. Williams called for all departments to take immediate steps to make visible improvements in the quality of life of District residents. Departments responded with short-term action plans ranging from "The Sale of 100 Boarded-Up Buildings" to "Pothole Blitz" to "One Number for the D.C. Government."

To address the mayor's public safety priority, the MPDC submitted a plan to tackle issues of top concern to residents, as well as problems that the average citizen may not see, but which directly affect the ability of the police to prevent and respond to crime:

- **Targeted Abatement of Open-Air Drug Markets.** Recognizing that law enforcement alone cannot restore safety in a neighborhood victimized by drug dealing, the MPDC will lead a dynamic approach to the problem of open-air drug markets that will involve community residents, grassroots community organizations, and other city agencies to reclaim and revitalize the community.
- **Enhanced Police Services.** Fully staffing the MPDC's new "full-service police district" model will put additional police resources in the field, where residents can more easily access them. The MPDC will also begin to host monthly meetings in all Police Service Areas (PSAs) so that citizens can get to know their officers and share their concerns and ideas for improving public safety in their neighborhood.
- **Improved Crime Information to Officers.** An additional 300 police vehicles will be equipped with mobile data

computers (MDCs), making it possible for more police officers on patrol to run inquiries from the field on license plates and names. The MDCs will soon be connected to the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, allowing officers to receive critical information about calls for service on their MDCs.

- **Tracking City Service Issues to Deter Crime.** To help other city agencies focus on fixing physical conditions that breed crime, every PSA team will conduct an assessment in their PSAs, identifying the areas where deteriorating conditions create the most dangerous crime and safety problems.
- **Improved Community-Police Coordination.** To build the capacity in both the community and the police department for partnerships and problem solving, the MPDC is about to launch joint problem-solving training to residents and police in all PSAs.



*Enhancing police services in the districts is a focus of the MPDC's short term action plan.*

"Within the next six months, District residents will notice continued improvement in their interactions with the police department and in the level of safety in their neighborhoods," said Chief Charles H. Ramsey. "After months of planning and preparation—including the wholesale reorganiza-

tion of the Department—we're well-positioned to implement these and other actions to make a visible change in our service to the community."

Mayor Williams announced the short-term action plan to improve public safety in early February. □

## MPDC On-Line

The Metropolitan Police Department is now accessible via the World Wide Web. Please visit us at [www.mpdc.org](http://www.mpdc.org).

The MPDC Web site includes detailed maps of each district and PSA, along with PSA meeting times and locations, contact



*The web site can be accessed at <http://www.mpdc.org>*

numbers of local police officials, and problem-solving resources in the neighborhood. Monthly crime statistics, mug shots of wanted and missing persons, links to other community policing sites, and a complete package of recruiting information — including a downloadable copy of the application form — are also available.

In the future, the Department plans to provide summary crime incident data, along with interactive forms for residents to report crime and disorder problems in their neighborhoods. Also planned are an MPDC Web site in

[www.mpdc.org](http://www.mpdc.org)

Spanish and touch-screen kiosks in each police district through which residents can access the web.

"Community policing and the Internet are an ideal match," said Kevin Morison, the MPDC's Director of Corporate Communications, who oversees development and maintenance of the site. "Through this rapidly advancing technology, we hope to provide the community with the information tools that will help them be more effective partners in building safer, healthier neighborhoods." □



# 1998: A Safer District of Columbia

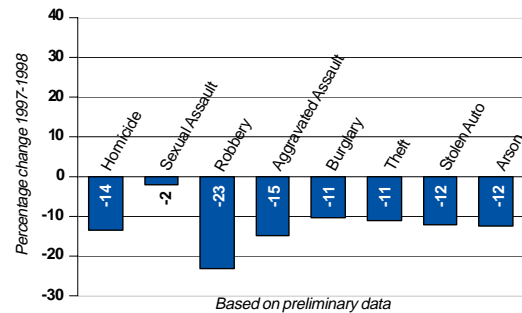
Reported crime in the Nation's Capital declined for the third year in a row during 1998. All eight major (index) crime categories showed decreases last year, with the largest reductions occurring among violent crimes. Homicides, for example, fell nearly 14 percent, reaching their lowest level since 1987. Preliminary figures also indicate significant decreases in rob-

beries (-23%) and serious assaults (-15%). Double-digit reductions were recorded in the four property crime categories as well.

While acknowledging that several factors may help explain the continued decrease in crime in Washington, D.C., Chief Ramsey singled out the hard work of police officers and residents working in partnership. □

## INDEX CRIMES DROP

Between 1997 and 1998, crime dropped in the eight major crime categories.



## Holocaust, cont.

now a regular component of training for MPDC recruits.

During the Holocaust, a period from 1933 to 1945, nearly six million Jews in Europe were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. Approximately five million opponents of Nazism and civilians of other religious, ethnic, and minority groups were also killed. While many people associate the murders only with elite SS Units, historians are now claiming on the basis of recently released documents that many of the early killings were carried out by municipal police officers during the German invasion of Russia. That was one year before the infamous Nazi death camps began operating.

Ramsey said the Holocaust Museum reminds today's police

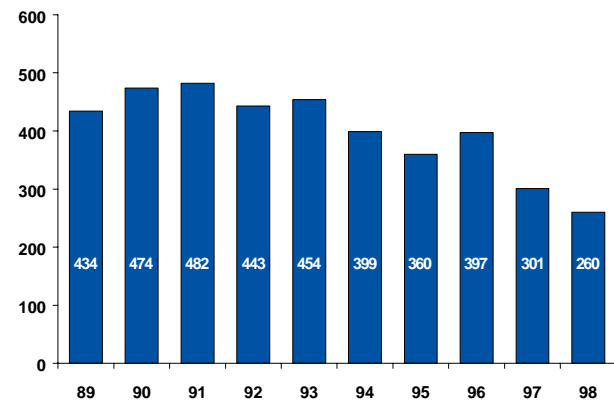
officers of their historic role in protecting not only lives and property, but also individual rights.

"There have been times in our own nation's history when crime levels were on the rise and it was not uncommon for some people to call for the suspension of the exclusionary rule, Miranda warnings, search and seizure protections, and other Constitutional rights," said Chief Ramsey. "If history tells us anything, it tells us that if calls for these types of actions should occur in the future, we the police must be the first—and the loudest—to speak out."

Chief Ramsey decided to make the topic of the Holocaust part of the recruit training after visiting the Holocaust Museum himself when he first arrived in the District of Columbia last spring. □

## HOMICIDE TOTALS

1998's homicide total is the lowest in the past 10 years.



## MPDC Promotes 124 Captains, Lieutenants, Sergeants

The MPDC's new "full-service police district" model is getting a boost with the promotion of 124 sworn members to three supervisory ranks.

In December, Chief Charles H. Ramsey announced the promotion of 10 lieutenants to the rank of captain, 44 sergeants to the rank of lieutenant, and 70 police officers and detectives to the rank of sergeant. All new promotees are being sent to work in the seven police districts, to provide additional staffing for community policing.

Under the new district operational model, captains will serve

as assistant district commanders. One captain will serve on each watch to ensure the efficient operation of all police district functions, both station house and field. These assistant district commanders will also be available to immediately address urgent community concerns.

One lieutenant will be assigned to each Police Service Area (PSA) and, assisted by a team of sergeants (one on each watch), will oversee the development and implementation of long-term action plans to address crime and disorder problems in the PSAs, in partnership with the community. □

*This newsletter is published by the Government of the District of Columbia, Metropolitan Police Department. Send comments to:*

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